DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 250 559 CE 040 129

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TITLE Fiscal Inadequacy of Adult Basic Education Legislation.
PUB DATE 84
NOTE 26p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adult Basic Education; Adult Literacy; Adult Programs; Economically Disadvantaged; *Educational Finance; *Educational Legislation; Educationally Disadvantaged; Federal Aid; Federal Government; Federal Legislation; *Federal State Relationship; *Government Role; Guidelines; Illiteracy; Literature Reviews; *Program Effectiveness; Program Implementation; State Aid; State Government; Underemployment
IDENTIFIERS *Adult Education Act 1966

ABSTRACT

A literature review examined the extent to which public funds for adult basic education and the guidelines under which funding is granted are meeting the needs of the target population as delineated by law. Research was limited to adult basic education programs funded by Federal and state monies and operated through the public school systems of Ohio. The literature review indicated that the Adult Education Act was enacted to eradicate poverty by providing the undereducated, underemployed, and poor adult with the basic reading and writing skills needed to retain or obtain employment. The literature revealed that the Federal Government authorizes and establishes funding levels and regulations and the 50 states serve as a bridge between the Federal level and their respective education agencies. The literature further indicated that, at best, the legislation is minimally serving the stated goals. Those benefitting the most were the secondary level students who are achieving General Educational Development certificates and gaining skills necessary to upgrade, retain, or obtain employment. Findings led to such recommendations as a philosophical and financial commitment beyond current legislation, institution of specialized programs for the target population, design of evaluations to measure stated outcomes, and support of the thrust to eradicate illiteracy. (YLB)

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ED250559

Fiscal Inadequacy of Adult Basic Education Legislation

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ED-ADMIN 956

Summer, 1984

Dr. Hack

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Fiscal Inadequacy of
Adult Basic Education Legislation

Introduction

Education is at the heart of the economic, social, and political life of America. In the early life of the United States, Thomas Jefferson stated that "Democracy can be no stronger than the enlightenment of its people" (Solomon, 1961, p. 86).

Dwight D. Eisenhower stated that "In America, the basic mission of education is clear and compelling: to provide every person -- regardless of race, economic status, and locality -- the opportunity to develop to the highest capacity of his or her own self and for the common good" (Solomon, 1961, p. 4).

In a message to Congress in 1961, John Kennedy emphasized that the progress of the nation could be no swifter than nation's progress in education (Solomon,1961).

Solomon (1961) expressed the notion that the needs of our modern economic, cultural, and technological society require a superior education system and that the greatest guarantee of America was an educated citizenry.

Frederick H. Harbison stated (Roe,1983) that "education is a primary instrument for resolving economic problems related to both underdevelopment and underutilization of human resources...and that human resources constitute the ultimate basis for wealth of a nation"(p.36).

As early as 1839, when Ohio enacted the first statutory law in the United States concerned with adult education, the implications were clear as to the importance of an educated society. The Ohio law permitted any

person twenty-one and over to attend evening school upon payment of tuition as required by the local board of education. Ohio statute opened the doors of Cincinnati and Cleveland Public Schools to adults in 1840 and 1850 respectively. In addition, Americanization schools for foreign-born adults were authorized (Hendrickson, 1958).

Nationally, Congress expressed a concern for adult literacy since the mid-1800's. Scholes (1972) reports that the Americanization programs were provided by Congress during the immigration wave of the early 1900's; that during the 1930's literacy training was held in conjunction with the Civil Conservation Corp, the Work Progress Administration, and the National Youth Corp; and during the 1940's literacy training was provided to the military. The fact that between 1920 and 1930 eighteen pieces of legislation were proposed but never enacted attests to the fact that a commitment to adult education only materialized during times of national crises.

In the 1960's,powerful social and economic forces were operating which once again resulted in federal legislation that responded to the educational and training needs of adults. Amidst concern for deprived lifestyles, educational and economic deprivation, shortage of skilled manpower, mounting public welfare costs, and questionable levels of national defense came a political solution to a problem which adult educators had unsuccessfully sought for years, the Adult Education Act of 1966. This act grew out of a long history to eradicate adult illiteracy and out of a concern to provide services to the undereducated and underemployed. As Kennedy stressed to Congress, "Economic results of this lack of schooling is often chronic unemployment, dependency or delinquency, with all the

consequences that entails for these individuals, their families, their communities, and the Nation. The twin tragedies of illiteracy and dependency are often passed on from generation to generation" (DeSanctis, 1979, p. 115).

Summary Statement of the Problem

This research examines the evolution of legislation enacting programs for adult literacy as implemented through adult basic education from 1966 to the present. The questions under consideration are: (1) What was the intent of the law and for whom was it enacted? (2) What is the nature of the federal-state relationship in implementing the program? (3) To what extent does existing legislation serve its stated goals?

Specific Problem Area

This research will address the extent to which public funds for adult basic education and the guidelines under which funding is granted are meeting the needs of the target population as delineated by law.

Definition of Terms

Adult -- Any individual who (1) has attained the age of sixteen, (2) does not have a high school diploma or has not achieved an equivalent level of education, and (3) is not currently enrolled in school (You Can, 1983).

Adult Basic Education - (P.L. 91-230,1970) Adult education for adults whose inability to speak, read, or write the English language constitutes a substantial impairment of their ability to get or retain employment commensurate with their real ability, which is designed to help eliminate such inability and raise their level of education with a view to making them less like to become dependent on others, to improve their ability to benefit from occupational training and otherwise increasing their opportunities for more productive and profitable employment, and to making them better able to meet their adult responsibilities (Sec. 303 (b)).

English Second Language - (ESL) Training in English language skills for adults whose first language is not English. These skills include basic, life, and general work skills.

GED - General Education Development test. A test, the completion of which, provides an alternative approach to achieving a high school diploma.

Target populations - Residents of rural areas, residents of urban areas with high rates of unemployment, adults with limited English language skills, institutionalized adults, older persons and immigrants.

Limitations

This research is limited to adult basic education programs which are funded by federal and state monies and which are operated through the public school systems of Ohio.

Significance of the Problem

In view of the fact that in the United States there are 51 million adults with neither a high school diploma or a GED, 36 million adults with less than eighth grade education, 100 million functional illiterates (grade levels one through four), 24 million total illiterates (Development Associate, 1979), and in Ohio there are two million illiterate adults, it is appropriate to explore the adequacies of publically financed adult basic education and to examine the intent of the law in relation to whom is being served.

The economic condition of Ohio and the nation can ill-afford a high proportion of undereducated, underemployed citizens. The pace at which knowledge is accumulating and technology is advancing leaves few options for this population. The political, economic, and social fiber of America is weakened by large numbers of undereducated people. The Adult Education Act was enacted with the intent of turning this liability in an asset. It is important to examine the extent to which this is being accomplished.

Review of Related Literature

Federal legislation for adult basic education grew out of powerful social and economic forces that were present in the 1960's and were reflected in the focus of Johnson's Great Society and the War on Poverty. The Adult Education Act of 1966, P.O. 89-750, had its roots in the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act which was enacted to eradicate poverty by providing the undereducated, underskilled, underemployed poor with the basic tools

to obtain or retain employment: reading and writing (DeSanctis, 1979).

The concept of human capital was a strong impetus in the legislation. The concept stressed the notion that education was an investment which brought returns both to the individual and to society and that education was the best guarantee of a flexible labor force. Of further import was the notion that levels of illiteracy were related to the extent to which people were receiving public aid (DeSanctis,1979). Although the need existed for legislation to extend public support of education for all ages, this act evolved with the intent to eliminate poverty in absolute terms and not as a means by which every American could be provided with a minimum level of education (Scholes, 1972).

Through the years, the Adult Education Act of 1966 has been amended and reauthorized and has expanded from its original emphasis of attacking the two precursors of poverty, inadequate academic skills and deficient coping skills (Scholes, 1972). The purpose of the program as reported in the 1981 Annual Report and as mandated by the 1970 legislation was "to expand educational opportunities for adults and to encourage the establishment of programs that would

(1) enable all adults to acquire basic skills necessary to function in society,

(2) enable adults who so desire to continue their education to at least the level of completion of secondary school, and

(3) make available to adults the means to secure training that will enable them to become more employable, productive, and responsible citizen" (394).

Given the amendments to the legislation, adult basic education came to include instruction in ESL, preparation for the GED, special programs for the elderly, the institutionalized, and the Indochinese refugees. The eligible population as noted in You Can (1983) are now defined as individuals who are at least 16 years of age, do not have a high school diploma or GED, and are not currently enrolled in school.

Scholes (1972) notes that the GED component was added in 1970 because of the (1) discrepency between the goals of legislation and the goals of the easily reached students; (2) specialized programs for the prime target population never materialized; (3) measures of program success had not been functional in fulfilling the intent of the legislation; and (4) Congressional funding had not been at a level commensurate with the cost of getting the job done.

Williams (1980) noted that federal revenue for education has historically been categorical rather than general aid. This legislation was no exception. The purposes of providing equal educational opportunity to those with special educational needs who have traditionally been unserved by state and local government and of encouraging the development of innovative approaches to adult education has been a hallmark of the Adult Education Act.

The federal role as set forth in the authorizing legislation is the establishment of funding and policy. Congress appropriates the money in the budgetary process; the U.S. Department of Education assures that the state plans are in compliance with the law (You Can, 1983).

The states serve as a bridge between federal policy and funding and the local projects and their participants. States plan the expenditures of federal funds within their respective jurisdictions and manage expenditures

in accordance with the state plan. Funds are allocated to the states on a formula basis, and the states in turn redistribute the funds to eligible local agencies (Annual Report, 1981).

Over the twenty year history of the Act, federal appropriations have increased from $18,612.00 in 1965 to $95. million in 1984. Ohio's portion of that allocation has risen from $660,369.00 to $5,790.437.00 over the same period. Each state is required to match the federal funds at a rate of ten cents for every ninety cents of federal money. States than distribute grants on the basis of application from local education agencies (Bowling & Ecos, 1984). (See Appendix A).

The Annual Report (1981) notes that criteria have been devloped by which states judge the merits of project applications. Among the criteria are: (1) the needs of the population to be served; (2) the extent to which the project reflects the project's intentions to reach adults least educated and most in need; (3) the extent to which the applicant gives emphasis to adult basic education projects; (4) the adequacy of outreach programs; (4) the extent to which cooperative arrangements have been established with other agencies in the delivery of services; (5) the available local resources; (6) the extent to which proposed activities meet the identified needs; and (7) the extent to which the proposed objectives can be accomplished within the amount of the budget request or allocation.

Included in each state's allocation is a five percent set aside for administrative costs. In Ohio, the Division of Educational Services of the Ohio Department of Education is responsible for overseeing the funding. The state staff plans and coordinates implementation of the act, works with other agencies, funds local projects, provides technical assistance, and monitors

and reports on state and local activities (Development Associate,1979).

DeSanctis (1979) reports two themes that are apparent in the course of the Adult Education Act. First, the dynamic rather than static nature of the purposes of legislation. Although the original intent was basic education, implementation in the states has resulted in an emphasis away from the target population. The Adult Education Act has been susceptible to numerous other educational programs and ideas that have appealed to Congress. Opportunities for the American Indian, the elderly, the institutionalized, immigrants, the Vietnam refugees and anyone wishing training to become more employable, productive, and responsible have been tagged to the legislation. In addition, pressures from states which saw opportunities for financial support of adult secondary, GED, and regular evening school have resulted in an amendment in 1970 to include the secondary level population (DeSanctis, 1979).

The second theme is the dynamics of the state and federal relationship and the role of the state as a service provider. In the 1960's, ABE benefitted from a belief that a strong federal leadership was necessary to solve national problems. As time has progressed, the role of the states has superceded with the 50 state directors exercising more political muscle and maximizing the freedom to determine the use of the money (DeSanctis, 1979).

There is a considerable difference among the fifty states in regards to organizational structure, implementation procedures, and proportion and source of non-federal monies allocated for adult basic education. Roe (1983) notes that state constitutions and provisions are critical factors in determining the extent to which programs are offered and funded and that among the states enthusiasm ranges from strong endorsement to apparent opposition.

Ohio has been a strong supporter and provider of ABE. Prerequisite to implementing programs, the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) submits a state plan which delineates the use of the federal funds and gives assurances of maintenance of effort to the Department of Education. (See Appendix B) Upon receipt of the federal allocation, the Division of Educational Services uses census data to identify the number of persons 25 years and older with less than an eighth grade education. This figure is then divided into the total state allocation to determine the per student allocation. This amount is distributed on a county basis. The 130 programs throughout Ohio each receive different amounts of money based on the number of programs in the county and to some extent on the numbers served (Bowling & Ecos, 1984).

Scholes (1972) lists three potential populations for ABE programs:

1. elementary level adults who are either very poor or in danger of being so because of lack of flexible job skills in a rapidly changing marketplace;
2. the very poor secondary student;
3. the non-poor secondary student who, although less vulnerable than the elementary adult, could suffer economic depression from lack of flexible skills.

Two evaluative measures by which individual programs are judged successful are the percentage of program completers who gain employment and the average gain in grade level in reading and mathematics. Statistics from the ODE indicate that in FY83, 2,342 persons obtained employment for an income of $16,319.056.00; 1,543 adults were removed from the welfare roles for a savings of $6,054.732.00; and 1,016 adults received job promotions for an increased

income of $422,545.00. (See Appendix C).

Scholes (1972) suggests that figures used to indicate those who were removed from welfare rolls, obtained employment, and received job promotions are not representative of the target population but rather of the secondary population who are (1) easier to reach, (2) easier to teach, (3) achieving at rates two to four times more rapid than the elementary level student, and (4) returning economic benefits to the nation.

The demand population is made up of the academically skilled secondary adults who left school for reasons of a personal nature; have, in many cases, been previously employed or at home rearing children; and need and desire a GED to enter or reenter the labor force or to upgrade a present position. These secondary learners show rapid educational gain, can and do adjust to the traditional methods of teaching delivery, and experience higher individual employments. It is this group to whom can be attributed the return of dollars to the economy through earned income and savings obtained from removal from the welfare roles (Scholes, 1972) (See Appendix D).

Scholes (1972) also noted that in contrast, the elementary level adult lacks functional competencies; requires specialized instructional services; measures individual success in terms of achieving personal goals such as the ability to read the Bible, sign checks, and grocery shop; and, if indeed academically capable, requires up to four, fifty week years to achieve a GED. When considering the size of the eligible population in relation to the funding, "so long as success is judged by criteria of annual achievement gain and employability at a decent job, the adult education program cannot afford the elementary-level student in the interest of its own preservation" (Scholes, 1972,10). Scholes further stresses that adult education will not

be effective in serving the broader target population unless there is an adjustment in evaluative measures of programs and in the present funding levels.

Discussion

The review of related literature indicates that the Adult Education Act emerged out of economic and social forces present in the 1960's and that now, twenty years later, the nation is still wrestling with the same concerns: eliminating poverty through eradicating illiteracy. The high incidence of adult illiteracy is critical especially in light of advancements in technology and knowledge. As more people take advantage of educational opportunities, the gap between educated and uneducated continues to grow. Some would even argue that programs such as adult basic education legislate a second-class citizenry.

In recent years concerns of various minorities have come "out of the closet." Women's rights and gay rights have evolved into issues with powerful social and political ramifications. It is time that the plight of adult illiteracy is recognized and dealt with on a national level.

The foundations of American democracy depend on an educated electorate. The paradox remains, however, that those most in need, the undereducated and underemployed, while taking advantage of adult basic education, are not the ones contributing back to the society. Statistics indicate and literature and practioners attest to the fact that it is the secondary level adult who is attaining goals at a significantly faster place than the low level adult. It appears that the intent of the legislation is out of "sync" with the type

of individual who is participating. Although a wide range of adults is enrolling, a self-selecting process is occurring in which the abler adult is overshadowing those most in need in terms of reaching educational and employments (Shannon, 1982).

Likewise, the nature of the federal and state relationship results in fifty state programs, each with different standards and measures. The nature of the relationship also results in lack of incentives for state and local education agencies to increase their share of the funding. Given the goals and the clientele of adult basic education, the existing funding levels provide minimal support. Even though adult education has been assigned, through Congress, a task by the American society to eliminate illiteracy, to be successful requires a partnership among those concerned with adult basic education.

The concerns expressed by Scholes in 1972 are still relevant today: the target population are the unreachables, the unemployed, elementary-level adults; those most easily reached and served have goals of secondary completion; the present methods of evaluation defeat the purpose of the legislation; and the funding levels, although properly eliminating secondary-level completion goals, actually eliminate service to elementary students because of added expense of service to those levels.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Question No. 1

What was the intent of the law and for whom was it enacted? The review of literature indicates that the Adult Education Act was enacted

to eradicate poverty by providing the undereducated, underemployed, and poor adult with the basic skills needed to retain or obtain employment: reading and writing.

Question No. 2

What is the nature of the state and federal relationship in implementing the program? The federal government authorizes and establishes the funding levels and the regulations. The fifty states serve as a bridge between the federal level and their respective education agencies. The fact that each state differs in program administration, financial support, and sets of standards indicates fifty different measures of program and quality.

Question No. 3

To what extent does existing legislation serve its stated goals? The review of literature indicates that, at best, the legislation is minimally serving the stated goals. Those most in need, while participating in adult basic education, are not the ones who are contributing back to society. While the goals of the legislation were to eradicate poverty through increased educational opportunities, those benefitting the most are the secondary level students who are achieving GED's and gaining skills necessary to upgrade, retain, or obtain employment.

Recommendations -

If adult illiteracy is to be eradicated, adult basic education must receive a bigger priority. There must be a powerful consensus building

effort on the national level. There must be a philosophical, as well as a financial, commitment that goes beyond the current legislation. Legislators, educators, and the American public must articulate an interest that captures borad-based support. Since it is likely that federal deficits and budgetary concerns will preclude additional monies on the federal level, more incentives for larger contributions on the state level must be made. The discrepancy between goals of the legislation and the goals of the easily reached adult must be resolved. Specialized programs for the target population must be instituted and evaluations which measure the stated outcomes in relation to the intent of the law must be designed. As Shannon (1982) stated "A strengthening of our national commitment to the importance of education will guarantee us skilled workers...we shall need as we enter the 21st century. And a sound partnership among federal, state, and local governments will balance the interest of all three levels and match the broader financial resources of the federal government with the creativity, ingenuity, and resourcefulness of the local and state authorities" (597).

In addition, the thrust to eradicate illiteracy that is presently underway through the efforts of volunteer groups must be supported and encouraged. Only when public and private sectors work together, when a strong commitment is shared,will action take place.

The danger of formulating legislative policy to eliminate a national plight is reiterated in Meizrow, Darkenwald, and Knox's Last Gamble on Education: Dynamics of Adult Basic Education. They state that "There are many who want to change the rules of the ABE game to give the players better odds. There are plenty of suggestions. Persuasive theorists would politicize adult basic education to create a 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' designed

to motivate learners by making them more fully aware of the political, economic, and social forces structuring their disadvantaged situation. Some educators want to vocationalize ABE by making it the handmaiden of job training. Others would socialize it by integration into a comprehensive program of social services. Still others would academize it by giving the whole program to the community colleges that already operate it in several states" (141).

A path must be made through the maze of legislation and politics that provides service to the adult illiterate. The Adult Education Act is a means to an end. Targeting concerns and rethinking the legislation can lead to more positive results that will serve both purposes: eliminating poverty through eradicating illiteracy.

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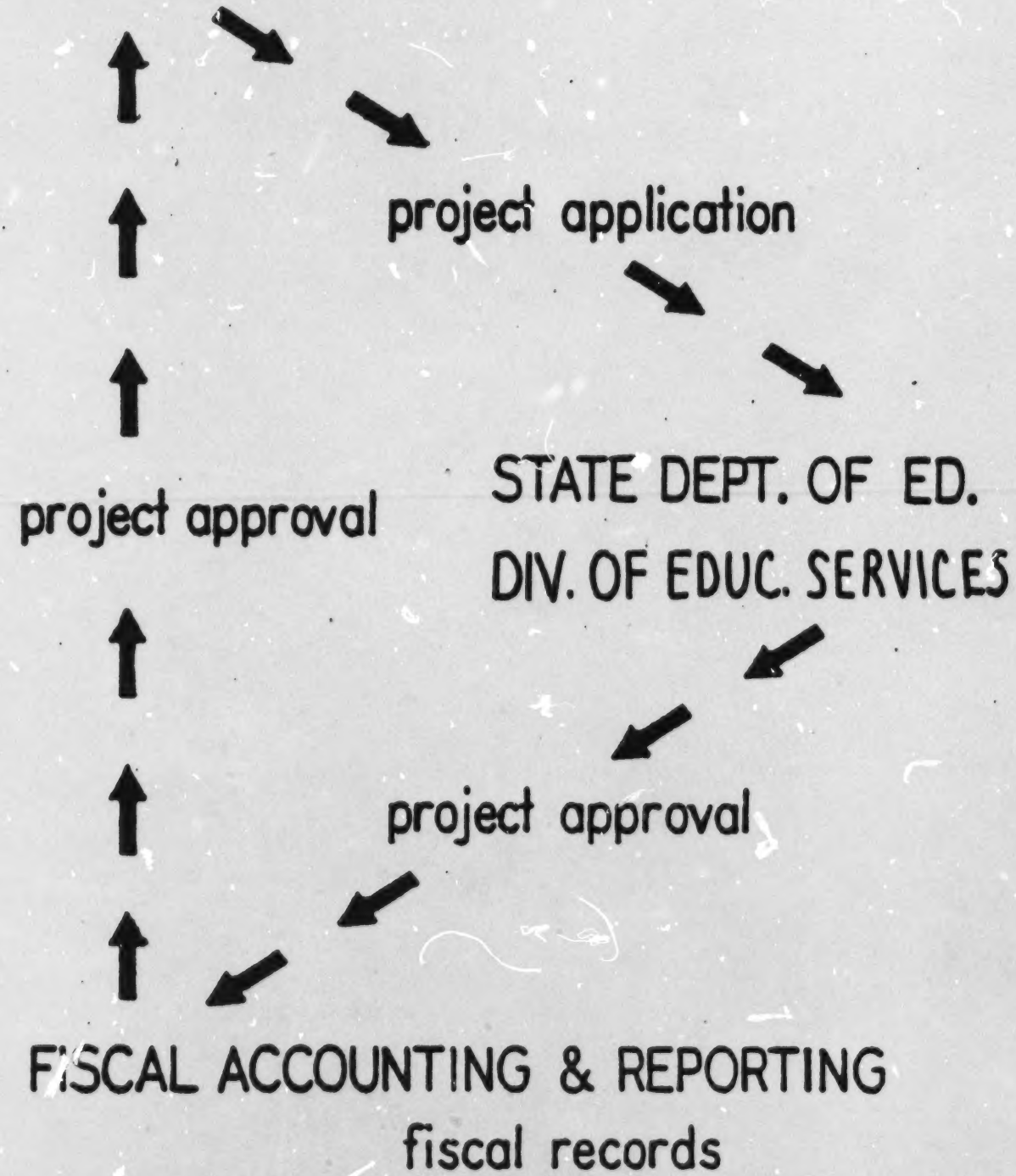
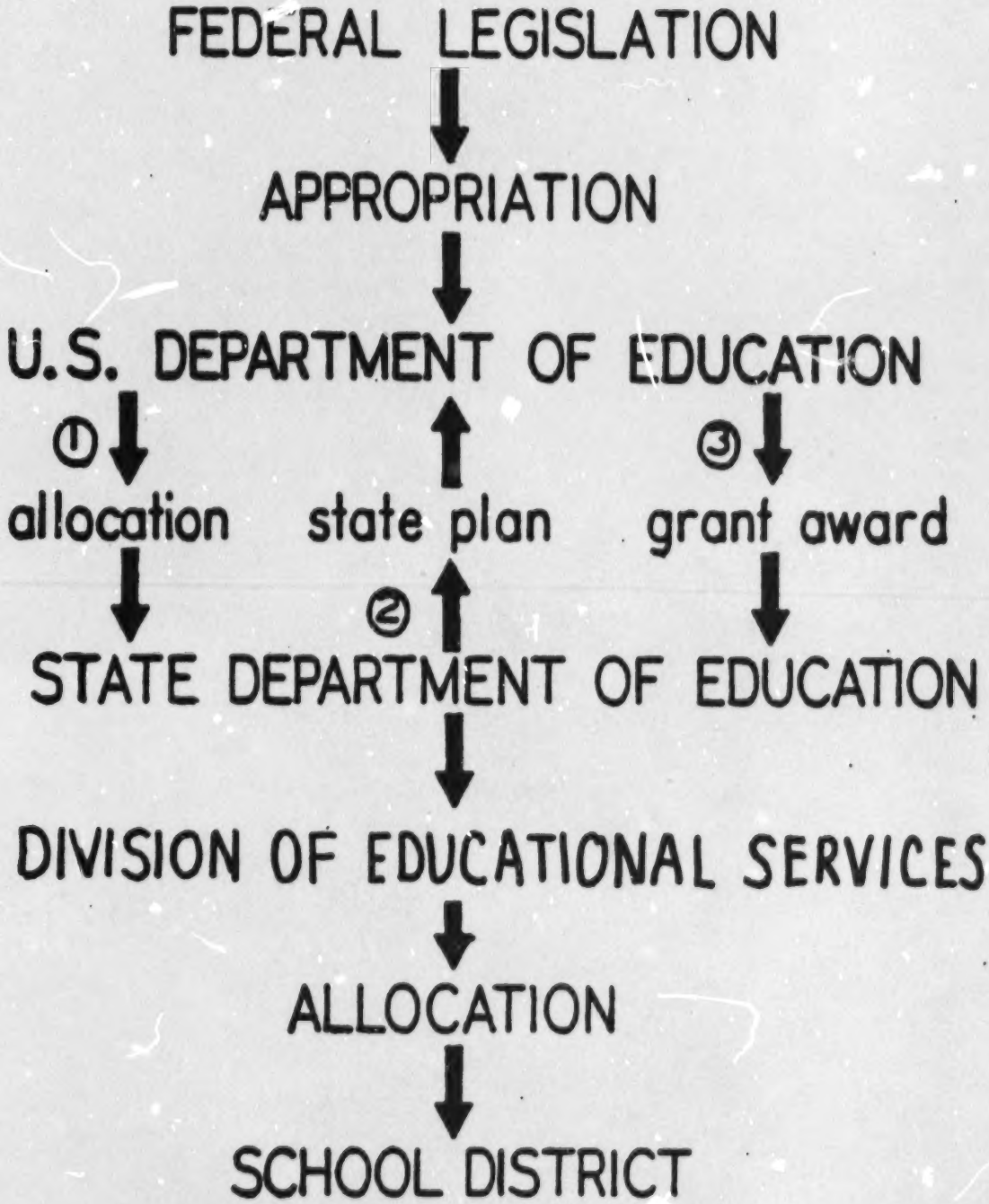
Appendix

PROJECT APPLICATION 2-A



ALLOCATION I-A



For more information, contact: The Ohio Department of Education, Division of Educational Services, 65 South Front Street, Room 811, Columbus, OH 43215.

ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

State of Ohio

Fiscal Year 1983

Ohio's Adult Basic Education Program provides services to residents who: 1) have less than a twelfth grade education or its functional equivalence and, 2) are not currently required to be enrolled in school.

Free instruction is offered in basic and life skills, general work skills, secondary completion (General Educational Development Test preparation), and English as a Second Language.

In FY 1983, a total of 52,140 Ohio adults were enrolled. Of these, eighty-five (85) percent were functioning at or below the eighth grade equivalence level at the time of their enrollment; sixty-one (61) percent were unemployed; and twenty-seven (27) percent were receiving public assistance.

Economic and Employment Impact Data:

Expenditures		Benefits	
Federal	$3,899,937.00	1,543 adults removed from public assistance for savings of:	
State	$1,100,000.00		
Local	$ 790,500.00		
Total	$5,790,437.00		$6,054,732.00 *
		2,342 Adults Secured New Employment for Income of:	
			$16,319,056.00 *
		1,016 Adults Received Job Promotions for Increased Income of:	
			$ 422,545.00 *

*Public assistance savings based on number of removals times annual benefit of $3,924.

Income estimates based on number of adults multiplied by minimum hourly wage of $3.35/hour for new employees and an additional $.20/hour for those receiving job promotions.

For more information, contact: The Ohio Department of Education, Division of Educational Services, 65 South Front Street, Room 811, Columbus, Ohio 43215, 614-466-5015.

Appendix C-1

ADULT BASIC EDUCATION
State of Ohio

Fiscal Year 1983

Economic and Employment Impact Data:

Ohio's Adult Basic Education Program provides services to residents who: 1) have less than a twelfth grade education or its functional equivalence and, 2) are not currently required to be enrolled in school.

Instruction is offered in basic and life skills, general work skills, secondary completion (General Educational Development Test preparation), and English as a Second Language.

In FY 1983, a total of 52,140 Ohio adults were enrolled. Of these, eighty-five (85) percent were functioning at or below the eighth grade equivalence level at the time of their enrollment; sixty-one (61) percent were unemployed; and twenty-seven (27) percent were receiving public assistance.

Some specific benefits and costs are outlined below:

A. Public Assistance

1.	Number of adults removed from public assistance during 1982-83.	1,543
2.	Average annual cost per household for public assistance in Ohio. This information was obtained from the State Public Assistance Program Office. (Based on an average household of four at $327.00 per month.)	$3,924.00
3.	Total projected savings per year. (Answer to number one multiplied by the answer to number two.)	$6,054,732.00

B. New Employment

1.	Number of unemployed adults who became employed during 1982-83 as a result of participation in adult education.	2,342
2.	Projected yearly income earned by adults who became employed. (Number of adults receiving jobs as a direct or indirect result of attending adult education classes multiplied by the minimum hourly rate, $3.35 at time of survey, times 40 hours x 52 weeks.)	$16,319,056.00
3.	Dollar estimate of combined local, state and federal taxes on new income returned to government. (Estimate at 30%)	$4,895,717.00

C. Job Promotion

1.	Number of adults promoted or upgraded during 1982-83 as a result of participation in adult education.	1,016
2.	Projected additional income earned by adults who were promoted as a result of adult education. (Number of adults receiving a promotion multiplied by $.20 per hour, minimal figure, times 40 hours x 52 weeks.)	$422,656.00
3.	Dollar estimate of combined local, state and federal taxes on increased income returned to government. (Estimated at 30%)	$126,797.00

D. Economic Return

1.	Expenditures	
	Federal	$3,899,937.00
	State	$1,100,000.00
	Local	$ 790,500.00
	Total	$5,790,437.00
2.	Benefits	$6,054,732.00
	Public Assistance Savings	$4,895,717.00
	Taxes on New Income	$ 126,797.00
	Taxes on Increased Income	$11,077,246.00
	Total	
3.	Return	$5,286,809.00
4.	Return Rate	91%

For more information, contact: The Ohio Department of Education, Division of Educational Services, 65 South Front Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215, 614-466-5015.

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ADULT BASIC EDUCATION
STATE OF OHIO

	FY79	FY80	FY81	FY82	FY83
Total Enrollment	41,137	50,056	52,136	55,546	52,140
Impact Data					
1. Completed Adult Education Program through eighth grade.	8,784	11,960	12,382	12,635	13,062
2. Passed general educational development test.	3,056	3,978	5,439	4,872	5,886
3. Graduated from Adult Secondary Education after starting in Adult Basic Education.	732	2,954	1,152	1,276	1,657
4. Enrolled in another education/ training program as a result of experience gained in ABE.	2,984	3,185	4,417	3,887	3,595
5. Are enrolled in program who are unemployed.	22,444	27,295	30,555	34,964	31,773
6. Are enrolled in program who are receiving public assistance.	9,127	11,949	12,055	13,508	14,197
7. Were removed from public assistance rolls.	1,135	1,606	1,700	1,638	1,543
8. Obtained jobs as a result of experience gained in program.	2,576	3,649	2,691	2,153	2,342
9. Changed to or were upgraded to a better job as a result of experience in program.	1,144	1,665	1,363	1,174	1,016
10. Registered to vote for the first time.	698	1,542	1,439	1,413	1,604
11. Received U.S. citizenship.	181	258	194	116	140
12. Received driver's license.	454	581	627	676	428
13. Received training in completing income tax forms.	2,087	3,112	3,589	3,651	2,837
14. Are enrolled in programs that were established for institutionalized persons.	1,756	3,839	4,695	7,532	7,623
15. Are enrolled in programs for persons of limited English-speaking ability.	4,126	6,550	5,551	5,407	6,225